

Free Air

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Free Air

by [Aguagi](#)

Summary

Ryuuko and Satsuki bond in a post-life fiber world. Five slices of life for the scissor sisters.

Notes

[Younger] Sister fic to "Gray Rock", where I explore Ragyou and Satsuki's relationship. Free Air is the closest antonym I could think of for Gray Rock (besides "Blue Tides", a name that makes no sense in the context of the fic). Gray rock[ing] is a method to deal with narcissists by not showing any emotion towards them (which Satsuki did in-series before her rebellion during the festival). Inspired by lurking on the RBN subreddit for far too long.

You look over to the form of your sleeping sister ungracefully sprawled facedown over most of the futon beside you, mouth open and a growing puddle of drool right next to her, snores thankfully absent. While you had slid onto the bedding with the grace and poise that you've always been instructed to wield since early in your life, she had all but collapsed onto the fluffy blankets and refused to move, practically passing out the second she fell. It was a miracle that she remembered to kick her filthy shoes off before doing so, the high-top sneakers lying in a sad pile at the foot of your mutual bedroom.

It was a mere year and a half after the fall of Honnouji, Ryuuko having graduated from Rinne Dou High School a short time ago. You had offered your home to her after noting she was returning to the city without the company of her best friend, who had been accepted to a job in the small town where the Mankanshokus had moved to after the island's destruction. Ryuuko had been selected by the hiring company to work in their flagship company in the very heart of Japan instead, fate inadvertently crossing your path with hers once more in a paperwork and litigation-filled present that would have prevented such a meeting otherwise. Ryuuko almost had turned down the job offer, but Mako herself had argued against it, wanting her friend to see more of the world at large as long as she came by their quiet little village every so often (and brought a healthy offering of delicious foodstuffs, of course).

You close the book you were reading, electing to leave it upon the nightstand rather than its usual place on your lap. The moonlight splashes upon her frame through the window, spilling over her back as a white stripe. In the soft glow, her back slowly undulates in an unhurried rhythm - three beats to breathe in, three beats to breathe out. The scowl seemingly perpetually plastered on her face has all but vanished in unyielding slumber, brows relaxed and completely devoid of tension.

You reach out and playfully poke her in her side when she rolls over to your half of the bed, where months of living together and a handful of scrappy brawls had informed you that it was extremely ticklish. She lazily swats at your hand after your eighth reiteration, mumbling incoherently in between attempts to kick you off the bedding. You turn over and pull her closer to you when she stops, and she responds by grunting softly and lightly nudging you in the stomach when your other hand moves to take the lion's share of the blankets. Her back meets your front and she snuggles against your radiant heat, opting to settle comfortably in the welcoming space you provided with a sigh. Yawning, she reaches over to the empty futon half and snags a free-lying pillow, curling into it in place of the usual wad of sheets before drifting back to sleep.

You watch her as she slumbers, pensively recounting your fights when the strip of illumination hits bared skin, the stark white highlighting the various ridges and valleys on her

body, scars accumulated from long years of fighting amongst her peers and against *you*.

You swallow thickly, eyes tracing over a particularly gnarly gash cut into her side. You had noticed it before by accident when she lifted the hem of her tanktop and wiped away the gathering sweat on her brow after a particularly intense workout. She had deflected your question when you posed it, waving it away when you insisted and refusing to elaborate further. And when you pressed about it for the entirety of the day, she mumbled something about it stemming from when Ragyou cut her in half on that fateful day, quickly changing the topic before you could point out that her activated life fibers would have perfectly healed it up. But you knew its true origins, felt it come into existence when your sliver of black had slid past her associated red and struck true, biting into skin and digging deep into flesh. The siren song of adrenaline had forced it away in the heat of battle, pushing it to the recesses of your brain, but now it returned, sending your stomach into twisting somersaults the more you thought about it.

You had no need of reminding her that you were not made of glass and paper, for she knew and felt your steely composition beforehand when you locked blades with hers in combat. But it warmed your heart to see the lengths she went to to avoid weighting your feelings, how surprisingly considerate she was when she stopped being bullheaded and obstinate for a single minute.

'This is her,' you think to yourself, staring into the tangled mess navy strands provided. *'My little sister, the one I dedicated my revolution to. The one I fought for. And,'* you pause, eyes losing their hardened edge the slightest bit, *'the one I mercilessly beat into the ground, the one I manipulated as my pawn in my ambitions, the one I spat upon and mocked relentlessly, even going so far as to turn her only friend against her in the process. What did she do to deserve this - any of this? She did not ask to be infused with life fibers, or suffer alone in misery for almost the entirety of her life...'*

Pity is something you've never nursed, righteous fury and the crackling roar of vengeance thrumming through your veins in its place. And they served your task well, picking you up when your physical body faltered, giving you new found a purpose when your father's apparent death took yours away. But now that you've put your swords and its associated persona away, it finds a new home within your heart, eating away at the back of your mind like corrosive acids against a skyscraper.

'How weak,' you berate yourself, thin lines of peach turning down in a scowl. *'How pitiful am I to feel such things, especially when it comes to her , who doesn't need me to act like a*

simpering fool. What would she think if she saw you right now, sniveling like the pig in human clothing you are!?’

Warmth suddenly blankets you, catching you off-guard.

She seems to have recognized your distress somehow, for suddenly you find her fingers lacing with your own, her hand bringing yours against the flat of her stomach under the overstuffed pillow before she stills once more. No shuffling of sheets gave her away, nor did a scrape of legs against silken threads - the usual indicators of her transient wakefulness. You startle, your reaction muted to only the slight rise of your brows and the widening of your lids from years of separating your being from such *weaknesses* surprised emotions tended to bring. The pleasant heat radiating from her skin warms yours, instills a vivid image of both of you as toddlers huddling together in mutually gained comfort, had Ragyou not experimented upon her and thrown her away.

And then your thoughts stop completely, the chattering in your mind condensing and coalescing into one singular realization, a revelation unparalleled in its strength that it easily bulldozes past the mental walls you’ve put into place.

You’re free.

Ragyou’s dead.

Everything’s fine.

It's okay to be sad.

It’s okay to *feel*.

And your eyes moisten then, water gathering at the pink corners of your lids but refusing to fall, for Kiryuuin Satsuki didn’t cry, didn’t shed a tear even when her empire crumbled at her feet and humanity’s fate left precariously in the balance. But your mouth betrays you, a

stifled noise escaping your throat that sounds suspiciously like a cross between a whine and a puff of air.

And she responds by drowsily rubbing her thumb over yours and murmuring whatever came to mind despite her greatly sleep-deprived status, a single repetitive motion that calms you down immensely just as well as your faithful attendant's bitter tea. And in that moment, the universe slows to a crawl for you, trapping you in that moment of inexplicable joy when your heart leaps to your throat and unadulterated happiness burbles in your chest, the full weight of understanding you were no longer alone in your struggles hitting you in full force.

You make sure to thank her doubly over in the morning even after she tells you to quit it, the small upward twitch of chapped lips telling you otherwise.

“Son of a - !”

Your attention is quickly diverted from the newspaper you were poring over as a metallic clatter breaks the silence, a spindle-shaped brow quirked as you observe her hissing and nursing the injured finger.

“What happened?” You call out, and she takes the bleeding digit out of the running stream of water.

“This carrot happened,” comes the grunted response, sweeping blue watching flesh knit together with a scowl. “I forgot how sharp some of these knives are.”

“I can take over cooking for you if you wish,” you offer, putting the paper down in a neatly folded pile upon the table. “It’s the least I can do, with you cleaning all day.”

“Nah, it’s fine,” she waves it off absentmindedly, turning back to attend to the rest of her uncut vegetables. “I need to work on my cooking anyway. I mean, life as a vagabond teaches

you how to take care of yourself, but it doesn't make you a five star chef, ya know what I mean?"

You simply nod in agreement, relegating yourself to watching her as she finishes preparing the ingredients and heads for the biggest burner your range possesses, cranking the settings up to "super boil" before dropping an obscene amount of oil into the heated pan.

She cackles with glee when flames dance from the curled metal upon the dampened vegetable's introduction, sizzling oils incinerating in burning wisps that issue forth atop searing greens that billow past your face and come dangerously close to singeing your prominent eyebrows. And the air suddenly smells like smoke and fire as orange tongues leap from cast iron, licking the stainless steel range hood.

You quickly make a mental note to not let her cook without you or Soroi watching over her for the next couple of months. But as you take a bite of the broccoli she accidentally stir fried and barbequed a mere twenty minutes later, you note the interesting taste the flame-touched vegetable seemed to provide and think of ways to bring out the latent expert chef sleeping within her.

The silence between the two of you is strained, charged with a buzzing electric tension that hurtles a billion thoughts in both directions. She had disappeared for days on end without a trace, leaving her phone, GPS-tracked motorcycle, and wallet behind. A stupid argument had forced a wedge between the two of you, a petty squabble that quickly devolved into a shouting match when your mutually stubborn natures collided and refused to back down. And you had said something unforgivable in the heat of the moment, a string of disparaging sentences that sounded unbelievably harsh even to your ears when tempers flared and patience withered. And time seemed to freeze in that moment, your mind burning to memory the horrified expression on her face in clear detail as the last of your rant issued forth to tear her apart, the fury and disgust she experienced soon rearing its ugly face on hers. And you had felt regret stab you a thousand times in your heart over the milliseconds after you caught her dismayed countenance. You reached out a hand towards her then, feebly trying to make up for the pain you inflicted upon her. But she had ran out the door before you could even declare the full extent of your remorse, taking with her the bag of still-unpacked fruits you had sent her to collect from the market earlier.

You now stand at the head of the stairwell, looking down upon her as had done many times before during your tenure as Honnouji's ruler. But this time, she doesn't look up, doesn't meet your gaze. Instead, her eyes are firmly trained at the muddy toes of her sneakers, at the floor, at anywhere else in the house that didn't include you in her peripheral, even when trapped as a series of photographs. You feel the burning guilt that consumes her, consumes you, keeps her feet rooted to the floor despite obvious movements from her part indicating her wish to draw nearer.

Wordlessly, you descend from your perch, holding your arms spread out for her. And she accepts after a long and indecisive pause, leaning into your embrace with a sigh.

The bindle she carries falls to the ground with a wooden clatter when arms reach up and embrace your body against her own, contents within the cloth wrapping forgotten. You feel her regret with every squeeze her arms make to pull you that much closer, every shaky breath she utters.

"I'm home," she whispers in sobbing breaths, crystal clear rivulets spilling from the corners of tightly clenched lids and wetting your shoulder amidst unsightly sniffles.

"Welcome home," you murmur back, reassuringly running a hand down the length of the back of her head.

"I'm sorry," she mouths against your bones, quivering even when you protest otherwise and responsibly place all the blame on yourself, for your failure in keeping your emotions in check.

And the both of you stand there in the empty foyer, simply reveling in each other's company, bleeding the hurt away and healing together.

For the first time in over nineteen years of living, her hair is perfectly groomed.

Well, as perfectly groomed as those infused with life fibers can get. Something about bonding with alien parasites made it impossible for those tresses to not look as if an intangible wind were blowing through them at all times. The edges still are rakishly canted towards the skies and the ever-present red streak still swoops low over her brows, refusing to stay pinned behind an ear. But you've dealt with it in the same way you've dealt with her after the near planetary apocalypse, with patience and good humor.

It had grown quite a bit since graduation, the trailing lengths the result of her laziness in getting them trimmed. With no need to recklessly fight on the streets, maintaining its short appearance to prevent others from grabbing it and using it to hold her in place while pummeling her was no longer necessary. It now hangs past her shoulders, ends settling near collarbones and tickling skin whenever she turned her head. It was also rife with knots and snarls, the unfortunate product of her not bothering to groom it properly at all, believing her usual routine of slicking it back with a hand after rolling out of bed and continuing on with her day to be more than sufficient.

You pass the boar-bristle brush through her hair once more, quietly shushing her grumbles all the while as you work out a pesky snag with a keen pair of blades. She sits perched upon the leather seat on all fours like a tamed lion in a circus, shifting constantly with impatience. The bright red gown she wears trails at her calves, silken material gracefully glimmering in the warm lighting and bringing a soft smile to your face. It is her suffered gift to you in an attempt to appease your fastidiousness, the high importance you placed upon her upcoming twentieth, her coming of age. She had protested your plans and argued instead to just go bar hopping in her usual sukajan, but capitulated after a very long and obtuse speech from her best friend, who argued that her sister was just trying to make up for all the years she spent alone.

Your feelings of contentment quickly sour at the thought, a sharp stab of pity running through you when the memory of Ryuuko nonchalantly mentioning offhand that she didn't know when her actual birthday was was brought to the forefront of your mind. Apparently, your shared father had neglected to celebrate it at any point in her life due to his work, leaving her with a fake birth certificate with equally fake parents and birthdate on it stuffed somewhere in an ancient safety deposit box in his stead. You quickly shake it off, however, satisfaction that she was here with you now and not long-dead (as you had assumed for many years of your life) filling you with a glowing sort of warmth as you shear off the last of the tangled mane.

"There! All done!"

You step back, clearly pleased with your work.

Ryuuko stood up, and, flicking the cloth bib away, showered the mansion floor with errant strands of clipped hairs. You gently smile back at her, holding a hand mirror out with an offering hand. She looks at the polished surface, startled upon sighting a completely different person staring back at her. Her hair shines with an unparalleled healthy sheen, neatly combed and parted evenly.

“You look beautiful, Ryuuko.”

She startles at the compliment, a faint etching of cherry dusting her cheeks mere seconds afterward. A wave of red and gold shimmered in the light, owner approvingly running a calloused hand through newly-tamed slivers of navy. Cobalt sparkled with a watery brightness that rivaled the purest of lakes, a genuine grin weaving its way on the younger’s lips.

“Thanks, Nee-san,” she quiets out, pretending to smooth out a wrinkle on a satin sash.

A car horn blared outside, and you sweep away the remaining clipped strands that stubbornly jutted from the silken material with broad sweeps of an arm.

“Let’s take our leave. You mustn’t be late for your own birthday, after all.”

“Are you sure?”

She blinks and fidgets silently where she stands, tension palpable in the empty space between you.

“I guess. It’s just...” a quiet sigh, “I shouldn’t be afraid to do this, especially since I’ve done a lot more stupid things in my life.”

“And you’re entirely sure of this? That you want me to - ?”

A hurried nod. “Yeah, yeah. Let’s hurry up and do this before I regret it.”

“Never have I thought that I would see the day when Matoi Ryuuko was actually daunted by something,” you tease, the edges of your lips goodnaturedly curling into that familiar sneer.

Silence.

Your smug smirk crumples into a reassuring expression, all pretenses and mannerisms of Honnouji’s dictator easily giving way to the new persona of a caring older sister.

“We’re going to do this together,” you gently remind her when she fails to rise to the bait, eyeing her form as she shifts nervously in the dark once again and comfortingly brushes a palm against the length of her arm.

Cobalt flits, blue twinkling in the slim patch of light rounded windows provided.

“I know.”

She eyes the strip of material in your hand warily, eyes catching your matching pair and visibly gulping.

“Do not falter now.”

She crosses the distance, allowing you to put her harnesses on and tie the straps taut. Her body presses against yours, nervous anticipation racing through every nerve in her body.

“Ready?”

She pauses, a quick decisive nod following soon afterward.

A roar of wind and sound streak past the two of you as the buffer leading to the outside world opens wide, screaming winds blowing past at over seventy miles per hour tearing at the protective clothing the both of you wear. And you fall with her in tow, letting gravity take its course and send you both plummeting to Earth. She is understandably less enthused at the prospect of falling a significant distance from the sky ever since her partner and closest confidant was literally ripped away from her and incinerated before her eyes a measly two years prior. But she had accepted your offer when you proposed it absentmindedly, unwilling to pass up an opportunity to do something else with you other than bear witness to the unrelenting stream of financial quagmires Revocs had gotten itself into after the would-be apocalypse.

And as the both of you descend in tandem, parachute long deployed and leaving the both of you alone in your thoughts whilst basking in the awe-inspiring view of the world several thousand feet above, you wonder how you ever had lived so long without her.

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